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Mother of Virtue

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In *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, a beautiful and enigmatic symbol is given to illustrate the way spirit works through a human being once the lower forces of nature have been subdued. "This symbol takes the form of a male and female figure standing back to back, the male figure holding above his head what looks like a shield or tray of silver, a great reflector, whilst the female figure holds aloft an urn full of oil."¹

Here we have depicted the fusion of the male and female polarities and the emergence of the divine hermaphrodite. The spell of duality is broken and the hypnotic charms of Mother Nature no longer hoodwink the consciousness through the form aspect, giving way instead to her higher identity as the creative partner of spirit. The splitting of the sexes has yielded valuable lessons down the ages, but now the search for an unattainable union on the lower planes is ended; the consummation of a greater pair of opposites, spirit and matter, has taken place and turned the attention outwards to expressing this in the world through creative service. The symbol contains a magnetic potency that strengthens the aspirant's will to stand in spiritual being, and we shall see how the strength to stand in this way and the virtues that qualify that strength are nurtured in Virgo. First though, we will pause and say together the Affirmation of the Disciple.

*I am a point of light within a greater Light.
I am a strand of loving energy within the stream of Love divine.
I am a point of sacrificial Fire, focused within the fiery Will of God.
And thus I stand.*

*I am a way by which men may achieve.
I am a source of strength, enabling them to stand.
I am a beam of light, shining upon their way.
And thus I stand.*

*And standing thus, revolve
And tread this way, the ways of men,
And know the ways of God.
And thus I stand.*

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To return to the symbol, the female figure is holding aloft an urn full of oil – holy oil being a symbol of "...the Love-principle of the higher planes which attracts the soul upward in softness, gentleness and harmony."² According to Swedenborg, "oil signifies the good of love which sanctifies, and everything that is sanctified has relation to truth."³ As the soothing balm of the vegetable kingdom, oils are also used as remedies for all manner of sickness and to facilitate an inner alignment within the form aspect through which spirit can more easily reveal itself.

The vegetable kingdom is along the feminine line of energy as we well know from the term Mother Nature, who, in her harmonious garb of green, represents unity in diversity, harmony through conflict and devotion towards the light. Certain oils from the natural world are capable of transmitting this inner harmony to that which is in conflict. As anointing with oil is said to be "a symbol of the endowment of the soul with Divine Love, arousing sympathy with all beings"⁴, we are encouraged to strive for an inner alignment with this energy so that

we can bring peace directly to those who are in conflict. It takes many lives of painful experience to equip ourselves for this service, but it is only by overcoming our own inner conflicts of passion that we become compassionate and responsive to the inner conflicts of others.

The keynote of Virgo is: *I am the mother and the child, I, God, I, matter am* – an affirmation that can only be truly spoken by the soul, standing, as it does, at the midway point between spirit and matter, and recognising its identity with both of these aspects of divinity. It is a position of strength that has to be achieved through ages of struggle, the very nature of strength indicating that conflict is required for it to demonstrate its power. From this strength is born that virtue associated with Virgo, and behind each virtue lies a long history of trial and failure, retrial and final victory. It is interesting that "virtue" comes from the Latin word *Virtus* meaning bravery, strength, capacity, skill, merit; and this was derived from *vir* meaning "man". Here we have the whole story of spirit's quest to manifest itself through matter – the Father fertilising the Mother with the seed of consciousness; the Mother nurturing this seed and then giving birth to the Christ Child who shines through her with virtuous light.

Virtue is not, therefore, a metaphor for kindly behaviour, or meek and mild mannerisms, but a tremendous inner power which expresses itself as pure colour to the inner eye. The aura of the personality becomes of such a refined character that it no longer sullies the soul's vibration, but offers a screen of 'beneficent resistance' on which virtue rays forth in bursts of spiritual colour. So too, every word spoken with love and compassion has its corresponding hue that is visible to the inner eye and bathes the aura of those towards whom it is directed with the virtuous properties of its light. It is equally true that the vile and lurid colours of the lower astral plane, such as those associated with lower psychism and psychedelia, are representative of involutory forces..."their tone is lower than the note of Nature. They are the offspring of night, esoterically understood. They are the basis of glamour, of despair, and of corruption, and must be neutralised...by the admission of the colours connected with light."⁵

The entrance of these pure colours into the world of form leads us on to a consideration of the silver tray that is held aloft by the male figure in the symbol. Esoterically, silver represents the moon as the great reflector of the sun's light; and it is the moon, veiling Vulcan, Who is the esoteric ruler of Virgo. The reflective properties of silver were used for a long time in traditional film photography before the advent of digital cameras, and they relied on the sensitivity of the photographic plate treated with a salt of silver. And in the manufacture of mirrors, before aluminium became the norm, quality mirrors were coated with a thin film of silver. This was deposited on glass and covered with a protective layer of varnish and paint.

Commenting on the symbolism of this in the early 1970's when both processes were the norm, Dr. L.F.C. Mees wrote, "in the world of silver [we are] dealing...with a world of images: mirrored images; photographic images. So great a contrast contained in those two words! The mirror, unthinkable without light; photography, unthinkable without a darkroom, without a dark compartment inside the camera. In the world of silver there is a constant alternation and interplay of dark and light."⁶ In the esoteric sense, silver could be compared to the soul infused form as an interface for the play of spirit on matter – the lunar forces that constitute the human personality being 'silvered up' to reflect the light of the soul.

If film photography can be thought of as dealing with the past, (and all photography does regardless of the technique involved) where the image is crystallised, unchanging and representative of things as they were, then the mirror would represent the present. For here the image is fluid and changing, and representative of things as they are. But what then of the future? From an esoteric angle, perhaps the silver chord mentioned in the Bible – the

shimmering stream of living energy that flows from the soul to its physical expression and "produces...the evolutionary unfoldment of all forms".⁷ The soul's life and plans for each incarnation are transmitted through this line of light, the effectiveness of the transmission depending upon the incarnated aspect's ability to listen and reflect. The soul's plans for each life are represented by a geometrical pattern of force – the purpose of the incarnation being to reproduce an image of this in the lower worlds.

The correspondences here with mirrored images and film photography provide much to brood upon but lead us away from our subject. There is another candidate more in line with our theme however, that lies hidden in the saying "silver tongued" – a phrase used to describe those who can speak eloquently and with persuasion, though not always, it must be admitted, with the good of the whole in mind. Interestingly, the throat chakra which lies behind the power of speech is of a silvery hue; according to C.W. Leadbeater "there is a good deal of blue in it, but its general effect is silvery and gleaming, with a kind of suggestion as of moonlight upon rippling water."⁸ Here we have the blue of love-wisdom and the silver tongue that should transmit it into the world through the creative power of sound.

The throat chakra is a sixteen petalled lotus which projects the force of our ideas into substance. In this way the divine archetypes towards which humanity is evolving are reflected in the lower worlds, and slowly the work of redemption proceeds. In his commentary on the book of Job, St. Gregory refers to Job's enunciation: "Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine".⁹ According to his interpretation "in silver the power of speaking, [and] in gold, brightness of life or of wisdom is...denoted".¹⁰ Through a great process of transmutation in the dark mines of human existence, the treasure of 'silver speech' is acquired – a treasure that is used only to convey the golden light of wisdom that was also found there through mining its depths.

All creative work is accomplished through sound, the great building agency of the cosmos. Sound is the midway point between spirit and matter, between the divine idea and the representative form. Sound it is that moulds matter to the wishes of spirit through creative intelligence. As such, the throat centre represents creativity, and not just through speaking, for any creative act involves sound, though it may not fall into the narrow frequency band which our physical sense of hearing registers. Crystallised in each form, is the musical note that created it, the purity of the note indicating either a close or distant association with spirit.

Here we see the importance of purifying the sound that each of us broadcasts to the world. For sound it is that determines the way things will go, what will appear and what will disappear; sound, the creator, sound, the destroyer, the revealer of motives, the fashioner of both vice and virtue. When we look at the polluted form of our planet from this perspective, we see a reflection of the state of the collective human mind. The impure and discordant sounds that lie back of our creativity are continuously reverberating down through the other kingdoms of nature eliciting a commensurate response. Much light is thrown on the changing behaviour of the animal kingdom through this line of thought, and could it be possible that even in the mineral kingdom, mass human thinking down the ages has affected form and relationship there too – even in the way elements combine? The implications are enormous.

The problem of form and its manipulation has been looming large in the consciousness of humanity for some time now, signifying that the gestation period in Virgo is reaching crisis point before the birth of the Christ. In the last 70 years much has been unraveled about the building blocks of human life. The discovery and mapping of the genetic code that conditions the human form which was completed in 2003 couldn't have come at a more symbolic time, and with it the choices that must be made towards good or evil. At the 2016 [World Economic Forum](#) in Davos, a panel called [Humankind and the Machine](#) brought together leading experts

in technology, governance, and bioethics to discuss new technologies that are certain to have a major impact on humanity: artificial intelligence, cyber-security, genetics, and space colonization. When questioned on whether advancements in biotechnology will eventually allow the manufacture of genetically designed human beings, representatives from the University of California at Berkeley and Duke University answered that this will certainly be the case. They prophesized that by 2030, gene-editing technologies will allow us to alter human genetics for specific outcomes such as the characteristics we choose in our children.

The panel suggested two important ways in which we might safeguard our integrity moving forward. First, education at all levels: the raising of awareness about the gene revolution and its implications for society. Second, instead of relying on rigid law-making, deliberative democracy should be used to engage multiple stakeholders in policy-making, including civil society groups like the [Forensic Genetics Policy Initiative](#). It was thought that an informed population with strong, democratic institutions is going to be more equipped to balance the rights of individuals with society's need to innovate and create beneficial technologies.

Both the commercialization and the politicization of human genetics require us to think through how humanity values individual diversity and integrity, and what action is needed to safeguard these things for the future. Article Two of [UNESCO's 1997 Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights](#) explicitly acknowledges that people have an inherent dignity that makes it "imperative not to reduce individuals to their genetic characteristics and to respect their uniqueness and diversity." While some countries have brought in bioethics legislation to address these challenges, [few have gone very far in re-interpreting their constitutional frameworks](#) around the preservation of human dignity and individualism.

All this is not to say categorically that genetic manipulation is right or wrong, for in itself it is neither. The physical form is not considered a principle as far as the Ageless Wisdom is concerned, but more as an automaton that reflects the inner workings of consciousness on the physical plane. It is the motive behind our actions that are important and require our consideration – it is our creative intent that will yield fruitful or degenerative consequences. It can be safely forecast however, that if there is a predominance of selfish intent in the field of genetic experimentation, the cumulative sound of the forms created are unlikely to be ones of virtue and light.

The relative good that can come through these techniques in helping the deformed and chronically ill, or of feeding the hungry is to be compared with the scenario of 'designer babies' and 'frankensteins foods' that pander to the vanity and over-consumption of the developed world. The idea of patenting human genes is a disturbing one and the irresponsible tampering with genetic material is only a few steps away from the return of the monstrous hybrids that were said to exist in distant root races. Fortunately though, these issues are entering the mind of the public and being widely debated, and this is the most important fact of all. The human race is fast approaching the glorious possibility of initiation into the spiritual life and it is therefore humanity as a whole that must decide the way that it will go. The problem of genetics is the problem of ethics, the hotbed of controversy surrounding it, the stone on which the collective blade of discrimination must be sharpened and wielded with precision to let in the waiting forces of light.

Humanity now has the power in its hands to literally shape the future; it stands as the Mother, with the choice to identify with the matter aspect that has so long controlled it or to recognise the Christ within and prepare the way for His birth. And the correct way of preparing the form for this greatest of spiritual events should be through an internal alchemy. As the esotericist works with sound in the light of the Plan, so will science eventually work too, shifting the focus of attention off the physical appearance and into the etheric realms. This shift of focus is being assisted through the thinking of the new group of world servers and all people of goodwill, keying up the vibration of the form nature and bringing virtue into the world. That

the form of the kingdoms of nature are being purified and tampered with at the same time is not only evidence of the duality that rages within humanity but also that it is reaching a point of crisis where a decision has to be made.

Through deep thinking on these issues, the nature and true purpose of form is slowly being revealed. As we start to look upon form as the vehicle of the indwelling life, our perspectives will change and we will see behind the glamour which currently enshrouds the form nature and which the media reflects. We will then look towards dissociating ourselves from our physical vehicles and preparing them scientifically for the entrance of the divine. This will not be with the tools of formal science though, but through the scientific use of the consecrated mind - for the Mother aspect gives birth to virtue by becoming virtue herself. A higher set of polarities then take over, the soul infused personality aligning itself with the Father aspect, pure spirit. But this lies far in the future; our immediate task is to raise and purify the form nature – to lift the urn of oil and the shield of silver high above our heads, that we can greet the entering light with strength and humility and offer the world the highest kind of service.

1. A Treatise on Cosmic Fire, A. Bailey, pg. 1221.
- 2 & 4. Dictionary of the Sacred Language of All Scriptures and Myths, pg. 548 & 50.
3. Apoc. Rev., n. 173. E. Swedenborg.
5. Letters on Occult Meditation, A. Bailey, pgs 209-210.
6. Living Metals, L.F.C. Mees, pg. 31-32.
7. Education in the New Age, A. Bailey, pg. 27.
8. The Chakras, CW. Leadbeater, pg. 13.
9. Job XXVIII. 1
10. Morals on the Book of Job, vol II. St. Gregory. Pg.343.
11. Initiation Human and Solar, A. Bailey, pg 152 (adapted).